BD urges ICC to shift its T20 World Cup games from India as tensions soar

DHAKA: Bangladesh have requested their matches at next month's ICC Twenty20 World Cup be played in Sri Lanka, after India forced a Bangladeshi cricketer to quit the Indian Premier League (IPL).

Political relations between India and Bangladesh soured after a mass uprising in Dhaka in 2024 toppled then prime minister Sheikh Hasina, a close ally of New Delhi.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) held an emergency meeting on Sunday.

"Following a thorough assessment of the prevailing situation and the growing concerns regarding the safety and security of the Bangladesh [cricket] contingent in India and considering the advice from the Bangladesh government, the [BCB] Board of Directors resolved that the Bangladesh national team will not travel to India for the tournament under the current conditions," the BCB statement said after the meeting.

"In light of this decision, the BCB has formally requested the International Cricket Council, as the event authority, to consider relocating all of Bangladesh's matches to a venue outside India."

Bangladesh fast bowler Mustafizur Rahman was on Saturday released by the Kolkata Knight Riders after the IPL team were "advised" by Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) to do so, following tensions between the neighbouring nations.

Earlier, Asif Nazrul, Youth and Sports Adviser in the interim government, said that Dhaka "will not accept any insult to Bangladeshi cricket, cricketers and Bangladesh under any circumstances."

"We welcome this [BCB] decision taken in the context of the extreme communal policy of India's cricket board," said Nazrul. "The days of slavery are over," he added, in a statement carried by the state-run BSS news agency on Sunday.

"Where a Bangladeshi cricketer cannot play in India despite being contracted, the entire Bangladeshi cricket team cannot feel safe going to play in the World Cup," he said.

The T20 World Cup begins on Feb 7, co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka. Bangladesh are scheduled to play their four group matches of the event in India.

Pakistan will play all their T20 World Cup matches in Sri Lanka, part of a deal that allows both India and Pakistan to play at neutral venues in multi-nation ICC tournaments.

India's foreign ministry last month condemned what it called "unremitting hostility against minorities" in Muslim-majority Bangladesh.

Bangladesh's interim leader, Nobel Peace Prize winner Muhammad Yunus, has accused India of exaggerating the scale of the violence.

BCB president Aminul Islam Bulbul earlier said that "the dignity and security of our cricketers are our top priorities".

Mustafizur, who has previously played in the IPL for other teams, was snapped up at auction in December by Kolkata for more than $1 million.

But BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia said that "considering recent developments" Kolkata had been "advised to release" the 30-year-old.

The 2026 IPL season begins on March 26.

Nazrul said he would also ask that the IPL be blocked by Bangladeshi broadcasters.

"I have requested the Information and Broadcasting Adviser to stop the broadcasting of the IPL tournament in Bangladesh," he said.

Kolkata, majority-owned by Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan, subsequently said that Mustafizur's "release has been carried out following due process and consultations".

The cricket row comes only days after tensions between the nations had appeared to have eased.

India's Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar visited Bangladesh last week, the most senior visit by an Indian official since the overthrow of Hasina.

On Friday, the BCB announced that India would go to Bangladesh for six white-ball matches in September.

Last month, hundreds protested near Bangladesh's High Commission in New Delhi after Hindu factory worker Dipu Chandra Das was beaten and set on fire in Bangladesh's Mymensingh district by a crowd that accused him of making derogatory remarks about Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). A total of 12 people were arrested in connection with his death.

Last year, the ICC allowed India to play Champions Trophy matches in Dubai due to soured relations with original hosts Pakistan.

On Sunday, cricket news site Cricbuzz reported that the BCB would ask the BCCI for a formal explanation regarding Mustafizur's release from KKR.The ICC did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment.—Agencies

PARTICIPANTS in action during the BYD Karachi Marathon at the Abdul Sattar Edhi Avenue on Sunday.

Israr retains Karachi Marathon crown, Sara claims women's title

By Shazia Hasan

KARACHI: Some 7,000 runners from across Pakistan, and more than 120 international participants representing over 25 countries, were up, stretching and warming up on Abdul Sattar Edhi Avenue even before the sun came up. They were all there for the third BYD Karachi Marathon from the A.K. Khan Park at Nishan-i-Pakistan to DHA Club, with various distances and U-turns marked for the running categories, here on Sunday.

There was a men and women's category for the full marathon, which spanned 42.195km. A relay also boasting the same distance, though divided into four parts for four members of a team, saw each of them running a distance of about 10.5km. A half marathon of 21.1km length also saw many enthusiastic participants though the biggest number of runners, including women, children and elderly runners, were witnessed in the 5km fun run designed for beginners and community groups. While, all the other categories started at 6:30am, the fun 5km run began at 10:00am.

According to Shoaib Nizami, CEO Sports in Pakistan and Race Director, the individual running time for each and every registered runner was being recorded. "So those who started a few minutes late need not worry," he told *Dawn*. "The progress of the participants can also be checked through an app. There are also Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) chips in their number bibs," he added.

Still, most of the runners were not really looking for glory as many of them said they were not there to win but finish the race, or just for fun and not hard competition.

And yet there were runners like nine-year-old Kainat Khalil, looking forward to hard competition. Even after the National Games fiasco where she was barred from running in the 5,000m race after winning bronze in the 10,000m race, she was registered for the half marathon.

Of course achieving best time there, she was discovered again and presented with an honorary prize in the end. The organisers called out her coach for doing an injustice to a child this young by entering her in long races. "A nine-year-old's body is not yet ready to take on such challenges of endurance. The allowed age for the full marathon is 13 years and above," it was pointed out.

Meanwhile, the top male and female runners of the full marathon, Israr Khattak (2 hours, 59 minutes and 58 seconds) and Sara Lodhi (3 hours, 33 minutes and 51 seconds) got more than just the prize purse of Rs500,000.

The marathon's official partners announced that in alignment with Vision 2032, which aims to prepare Pakistani runners to qualify and compete at the Olympics, they will sponsor them to participate at this year's London Marathon.

While thanking the organisers and sponsors, Israr said that he was happy to have won the marathon though he had slightly fallen behind on his last year's timing of 2:30:13.

Sara, who had flown in from Dubai to run in the marathon, her first in Karachi but 11th altogether, said that she loved the running environment of Karachi alongside beach, with people of all ages taking part in the various distance marathons, running alongside her.

Besides, the Rs500,000 for first place, there was Rs250,000 for second place, and Rs125,000 for third place finishers in the full marathon.

In the relay category, the Dalmia Strike team was first to take home the top prize of Rs50,000, as Zamaray Athletics was second to receive Rs30,000 and The Young Incredibles were third to claim the Rs20,000 prize.

In the male category of the half marathon Mohammad Akhtar (1 hour, 19 minutes and 29 seconds) was first, Atta Us Samad was second (1 hour, 19 minutes and 48 seconds) and Faizan Faiz was third (1 hour, 20 minutes and 11 seconds).

In the female category of the half marathon Kaukab Sarwar was first (1 hour, 53 minutes and 57 seconds), Dr Rabia Naeem second (1 hour, 58 minutes and 0.4 seconds) and Dr Zoha Poonawala was third (1 hour, 59 minutes and 20 seconds).

Liton to lead BD in T20 World Cup

DHAKA: Bangladesh on Sunday named their squad for the T20 World Cup beginning in February, leaving out middle-order batters Jaker Ali Anik and Mahidul Islam, and selecting five fast bowlers.

Wicket-keeper/batter Liton Das will also lead Bangladesh in the tournament in India and Sri Lanka, the Bangladesh Cricket Board said.

But the announcement also came as Dhaka requested that its four group matches in India be moved to Sri Lanka, after anger because India forced a Bangladeshi player to quit the Indian Premier League.Top-order options Tanzid Hasan Tamim and Parvez Hossain Emon made the squad, while Towhid Hridoy is the only specialist middle-order batter.

Shamim Hossain and Nurul Hasan have been picked as finishers, while a varied bowling attack will be led by left-arm pacer Mustafizur Rahman and fast bowler Taskin Ahmed.

The spin department includes off-spinner Mahedi Hasan, left-arm spinner Nasum Ahmed and leg-spinner Rishad Hossain, while seam support will come from Tanzim Hasan Sakib, Shoriful Islam and Mohammad Shaifuddin.

Squad: Liton Das (captain), Mohammad Saif Hasan, Tanzid Hasan Tamim, Parvez Hossain Emon, Towhid Hridoy, Shamim Hossain, Nurul Hasan Sohan, Mahedi Hasan, Rishad Hossain, Nasum Ahmed, Mustafizur Rahman, Tanzim Hasan Sakib, Taskin Ahmed, Mohammad Shaifuddin, Shoriful Islam.—AFP

SYDNEY: England batter Harry Brook drives during the fifth Ashes Test against Australia at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Sunday.—Reuters

Root, Brook lift England to 211-3 after early jolts at rain-hit SCG

SYDNEY: Joe Root and Harry Brook tamed Australia's all-pace attack with an unbroken 154-run stand on Sunday to rescue England and give them the upper hand after a rain-hit day one of the fifth and final Ashes Test.

Batting after skipper Ben Stokes won the toss at a sold-out Sydney Cricket Ground, they steered the tourists to 211-3 when bad light forced the players from the field just before tea.

Subsequent rain and the risk of lightning made no further play possible, with stumps called an hour early.

Root was not out 72 and Brook on 78 after coming together with England tottering at 57-3 following the wickets of Ben Duckett (27), Zak Crawley (16) and Jacob Bethell (10) before lunch.

The world's top two-ranked batsmen set about counter-attacking on a decent batting pitch providing little movement for the bowlers.

Both brought up hard-fought half-centuries and, with dark storm clouds looming, kept the scoreboard ticking over at a fast clip.

"We're in very good position, obviously three down at the end of the end of play," said Brook.

"Hopefully we can make the most of that going into tomorrow. It was a good pitch.

"When I first went in it felt like the bounce was fairly steep. But then it it started to get a little bit lower and slower and just generally feels like a good wicket."

England came into the game buoyed by a four-wicket win inside two days in the previous Test in Melbourne, desperate to keep the momentum going.

That victory snapped a 15-year winless streak in Australia but came too late to save the series, with the hosts retaining the urn by winning in Perth, Brisbane and Adelaide.

Australia sprang a surprise by including all-rounder Beau Webster in place of quick Jhye Richardson, with off-spinner Todd Murphy overlooked.

It is the first time in almost 140 years that the hosts have not played a front-line spinner during a Sydney Test.

"Hate doing it," said Australia skipper Steve Smith. "But if we keep producing wickets that we don't think are going to spin and seam is going to play a big part and cracks are going to play a big part, you kind of get pushed into a corner."

England brought in seamer Matthew Potts for the injured Gus Atkinson in their only change, with their frontline slow bowler Shoaib Bashir missing out for a fifth straight Test.

The day began with a tribute to first responders at the Bondi mass shooting last month that killed 15 people, with huge cheers when hero Ahmed Al Ahmed, who tackled one of the gunmen, appeared.

Duckett was lively when play started, crunching five boundaries from Mitchell Starc in a quickfire 27 off 24 balls.

But England's tormentor-in-chief Mitchell Starc had the last laugh, enticing an outside edge from an angled ball to wicket-keeper Alex Carey at full stretch. It was the fifth time Starc has bagged Duckett this series.

Crawley was next to go, trapped lbw by Michael Neser, with both openers back in the sheds by the first drinks break and the tourists in trouble on 51-2.

A cautious Bethell took 15 balls to get off the mark and never looked confident.

He departed after prodding at a moving delivery from Scott Boland that took a faint edge to Carey as England fell to 57-3.

Root joined Brook at the crease and they began to rebuild.

They rotated the strike well and punished any loose balls with Root bringing up his 67th half-century, and the 100-partnership, with a single off Webster.

Only Indian great Sachin Tendulkar, with 68, has scored more Test fifties.

Brook was fortunate to survive on 45 when he slogged Starc and the ball dropped between three chasing fielders.

But he kept his composure to reach a 15th half-century four balls after Root, cracking Webster through the covers for a boundary.—AFP

Scoreboard

ENGLAND (1st Innings):
Z. Crawley lbw Neser 16
B. Duckett c Carey b Starc 27
J. Bethell c Carey b Boland 10
J. Root not out 72
H. Brook not out 78
EXTRAS (B-1, LB-5, NB-1, W-1) 8
TOTAL (for three wkts, 45 overs) 211
FALL OF WICKETS: 1-35 (Duckett), 2-51 (Crawley), 3-57 (Bethell)
STILL TO BAT: B. Stokes, J. Smith, W. Jacks, B. Carse, M. Potts, J. Tongue
BOWLING: Starc 12-1-53-1 (1nb); Neser 10-0-36-1; Boland 13-0-48-1; Green 8-0-57-0 (1w); Webster 2-0-11-0
AUSTRALIA: J. Weatherald, T. Head, M. Labuschagne, S. Smith (captain), U. Khawaja, A. Carey, C. Green, B. Webster, M. Neser, M. Starc, S. Boland.

Liverpool denied by late drama at Fulham, United held by Leeds

LONDON: Harrison Reed struck a stunning equaliser for Fulham to salvage a 2-2 draw against Liverpool as both sides scored in stoppage time, while Manchester United were held 1-1 at Leeds on Sunday.

Liverpool looked set to consolidate their place in the Premier League's top four when they came from behind to lead at Craven Cottage.

Harry Wilson opened the scoring against his former club to give Fulham a deserved half-time lead.

Florian Wirtz levelled before Cody Gakpo steered home Jeremie Frimpong's cross in the 94th minute.

However, the visitors' celebrations were cut short when Reed took aim from outside the box and blasted into the top corner for his first goal in three years.

A point keeps Liverpool three points ahead of fifth-placed United in the battle for a place in next season's Champions League.

The Red Devils were headed to a rare defeat at Elland Road as the sides rekindled their historic rivalry after Leeds' two-year absence from the Premier League.

Brenden Aaronson's strike early in the second half sparked wild scenes of jubilation among the home fans, but Matheus Cunha quickly levelled to ensure United did not fall to a first defeat against Leeds in 16 years.

Tottenham did little to ease the pressure on Thomas Frank in a 1-1 draw at home to Sunderland.

Ben Davies put Spurs in front, but they were unable to hold out for just a second home league win since the opening weekend of the season.

Brian Brobbey's equalised 10 minutes from time for Sunderland to extend their unbeaten run to five games.

Spurs slip to 13th, three points behind eighth-placed Sunderland.

Igor Thiago's hat-trick fired Brentford up to seventh with a 4-2 win at Everton. Nathan Collins was also on target for the Bees, who climb to within four points of the top four.

Newcastle are also back in the running for a place in next season's Champions League after a 2-0 win over Crystal Palace.

Second half goals from Bruno Guimaraes and Malick Thiaw lifted the Magpies up to ninth and within five points of Liverpool.

Late on Saturday, Declan Rice scored twice as Arsenal shrugged off a poor start to beat Bournemouth 3-2 away and open up a commanding six-point lead at the top of the table.

Rice slotted a shot past Dorde Petrovic early in the second half to put Arsenal in front and found the net again after being set up by substitute Bukayo Saka.

Bournemouth were gifted the lead in the 10th minute when Arsenal's usually impeccable defender Gabriel passed straight to home striker Evanilson who finished with ease.

But Gabriel soon made amends for his rare error as he fired in an equaliser six minutes later.

Arsenal appeared to be cruising after Rice's double but substitute Junior Kroupi smashed a shot past David Raya to set up an anxious finale for the visitors.—Agencies

'An enormous triumph,' amputee Baumel wins Dakar Rally first stage

YANBU: Frenchman Mathieu Baumel hailed an "enormous triumph" as just a year after having his leg amputated he won the opening stage of the Dakar Rally alongside Belgian driver Guillaume De Mevius on Sunday.

Navigator Baumel was back at the race just 11 months after his right lower leg was amputated after being run over while helping someone who had broken down on the road in France.

Last January, it had looked as if life behind the wheel was in the past for the successful co-driver and navigator.

"Just being here is an enormous triumph," said the 49-year-old, who got into his car on Sunday carrying his prosthetic limb.

Driving a mini the pair won the perilous 305km first stage at Yanbu, Saudi Arabia.

Baumel had previously won the Dakar Rally four times as co-pilot to Nasser Al-Attiyah, most recently back-to-back titles in 2022 and 2023.

On Sunday, Qatari Al-Attiyah in a Dacia was 40 second down in second with Czech Martin Prokop of Ford third at 1min 30sec.

De Mevius, sitting top of the heap at the finish line, admitted he was surprised.

"It wasn't particularly the objective to win today, but we said to ourselves with Mathieu (Baumel) that we wanted to at least win one on the Dakar stages," he said after a stoney and dusty ride.

Al-Attiyah had mixed feelings saying he "could have lost it all" on the challenging route and lamented that he had been ahead of the day's winner for most of the stage.

French driver Sebastien Loeb came 10th in his Dacia losing three minutes with a puncture after also leading the field.

Reigning Dakar champion Yazeed Al-Rajhi was the big loser of the day as the Saudi was slapped with a 16-minute penalty due to a missed crossing point.

In the motorcycle category, Spain's Edgar Canet, already winner of the prologue, benefited after Botswana's Ross Branch received a six-minute penalty for speeding in a restricted zone. Canet leads Australia's Daniel Sanders by just over a minute.

On Monday, the competitors will tackle a first big day of racing, heading towards Al Ula after more than 500km, 400 of which are individually timed.—AFP

DACIA'S Sebastien Loeb and Edouard Boulanger in action during the first stage of the Dakar Rally on Sunday.—Reuters